

## **Information, opportunity and gender: petition-signing and the internet in Australia**

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### **Abstract**

This paper compares offline and online petition signing in Australia, to examine whether online forms of political activity can mobilise citizens who would otherwise not participate. Using data from the 2010 Australian Election Study and a model of civic voluntarism comprising online and offline resources, the study presents several unexpected findings. First, women are significantly more likely than men to sign both written and e-petitions, and this will likely continue with the increasing circulation of e-petitions and corresponding decline in written petitions. Second, Australians from a non-English speaking background are underrepresented in written petition signing but not e-petition signing. While civic skills gained in the workplace and voluntary organisations positively predict both forms of petition signing, language, gender and income do not constitute barriers to e-petition signing. This study contributes to emerging evidence the internet can mobilise traditionally underrepresented groups to participate in political activity.

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## ***Introduction***

This study explores the effect of new opportunities to participate in one specific form of political activity: petition signing. Petition signing is a longstanding form of political participation, while the advent of online or 'e-petitions' has increased internet users' opportunities to sign petitions, potentially expanding participation to citizens who have not previously had the opportunity or the inclination. Offline and e-petition signing are both non-confrontational ways of protesting government actions or policies, and usually focus on a single issue or goal (Dalton 2008a). Participants tend to engage on a sporadic basis, according to the salience of different issues and the opportunity to protest with others. This study examines trends in petition signing by Australian citizens, both offline and online, before looking more closely at who has the opportunity to sign petitions in Australia, and how opportunity (rather than intent) affects who signs petitions.

The selection of both activity and case are largely instrumental. The 2010 Australian Election Study (AES) contains measures of both 'offline' and online petition signing, allowing quantitative analyses of engagement in each behaviour. The two measures are straightforward, asking respondents whether or not they signed a petition/e-petition in the previous five years. Moreover, the 2010 AES includes a large range of measures that may be expected to affect petition signing; many of those independent variables originated in the 2010 study and have not been repeated in the subsequent (2013) study. Finally, in a country where almost ubiquitous voter participation (due to compulsory voting laws) makes studying turnout difficult, petition signing comprises enough variance to be suitable for the multivariate regression analysis employed in this study. Cross-sectional analyses of petition signing in Australia in 2010, using descriptive data and binary logistic regression analysis, focus on the effects of internet use on individuals' propensity to participate. Where available, 2013 AES data complement the analysis.

Protest, including petition-signing, and other forms of political participation do not differ so much conceptually as historically. Verba and Nie's (1972) study of participation observed communal participation as the more common form of informal (i.e. non-electoral or partisan) participation, while Kaase and Marsh (1979b) subsequently observed the first signs of growth in protest politics in advanced democracies. Norris (2002) refers to 'new repertoires' of political activism fostered by new 'agencies' or collective organisations, and focused on new 'targets'. Dalton (2008a;

2008b) describes new citizenship norms as moving away from the focus on civic duty to interest in self-expression and engagement with society. He draws on Inglehart's (1977; 2008) observation of increasingly postmaterialist values in advanced democracies to argue, against Putnam (2001), that the concept of citizenship remains strong among Americans, at least, and that political engagement is not declining but taking on new, previously unmeasured, forms. In Australia, Vromen (2007; 2003) likewise cites evidence that younger generations are as political engaged as their predecessors, but display their engagement through forms of protest not traditionally considered 'participatory'. Bean (1991) finds a mediated causal relationship between traditional (including communal) forms of participation and protest. He also finds evidence of a 'slippery slope' relationship between low-level protest, including petition signing, and more confrontational forms of protest in Australia.

More recently, research has focussed on emerging opportunities to participate online. Some studies, such as Bimber, Stohl and Flanagin's (2012) work on collective action in online organisations, focus on the opportunities created by the internet for mass, geographically diffuse protest. Carty (2002; 2010a; 2010b) observes the connections between grassroots mobilisation in traditional-style protests, for instance those against sweatshop labour and the corporate practices of multinational companies. Her findings suggest that the internet has allowed for the consolidation and expansion of existing protest movements. Similarly, Van Laer (2007; and Van Aelst 2009; 2010; and Kruikemeier et al. 2013) has studied the relationship between online mobilisation and offline protest. He and others find that protestors who also use the internet heavily become, by sharing information among a small channel of protestors and reinforcement of political engagement, 'superactivists' who engage in several forms of participation.

This study draws primarily on Verba et al.'s (1995) civic voluntarism model of political participation in making assumptions about the effects of internet use on petition-signing in Australia. It is expected that petition signing is contingent on opportunity – being emailed a petition, belonging to an organisation, et cetera – rather than particular resources. Internet use, in terms of both skills and time spent online, is expected to positively affect e-petition signing, while offline petition signing should be positively affected by membership of non-political organisations. There seems little reason that other factors would have specific effects on petition signing, according to the civic voluntarism model. The study begins by expanding on these hypotheses in the context of the civic voluntarism model of participation. It discusses the competing theorised effects of resources and deprivation in mobilising protestors, noting that

Dalton et al. (2010) argue persuasively that protestors are more often opportunistic than aggrieved. It also details the advent of online advocacy group GetUp!, which is expected to have had a positive effect on the overall rate of petition signing in Australia.

### ***Internet resources and protest: new opportunities to participate***

Protest participation, including petition signing, differs from conventional forms of participation in two key ways. First, it tends to occur outside of traditional political structures, instead of within them. Protestors typically have low satisfaction with democracy and less trust in government, leading them to go outside of those structures to make their voices heard (Kaase and Marsh 1979b). Second, protestors have traditionally displayed 'relative deprivation' rather than high socioeconomic status (Kaase and Marsh 1979a; Verba and Nie 1972; Verba et al. 1995). Kaase and Marsh (1979a p.186) observed in the 1970s that 'protest is very much the political style of the young and less educated – men and women equally'. More recent research finds that 'new era' protestors, including anti-globalism and anti-racism activists, generally have high socioeconomic status (Norris 2002; Norris et al. 2005). By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, protestors were on average young, well-educated men (Norris 2002 pp.201–2; Volkov 2012). This section explores whether, using the civic voluntarism (Verba et al. 1995) framework, Australian protestors match Kaase and Marsh's (1979a) profile. It is hypothesised that internet use will decrease the influence of free time and civic skills on protest participation.

Verba et al. (1995) theorise that free time is a necessary condition of all forms of political participation. However, petition signing is not expected to be directly affected by whether an individual has free time or not, as the act itself can be completed quickly. Signing e-petitions should require even less time to complete. Rather, e-petition signing will likely be a factor of time spent online: this, independently of internet proficiency or other traditional civic skills, should positively affect whether an individual signed an e-petition between 2005 and 2010. Further, the more time a person spends online, the more likely it is that they will come across an e-petition or have one sent to them by a political actor or someone known to them.

Money is a theorised predictor of conventional forms of political participation, such as voting or party membership. Contrarily, studies have generally found that protestors have less money than the rest of a population (Kaase and Marsh, 1979a; Verba et al., 1995). Kaase and Marsh (1979a) find that protestors in the Netherlands,

Britain, United States, Germany and Austria are also younger and have less formal education than non-protestors, suggesting that the lack of money among protestors is as much an effect of lifecycle as of entrenched poverty. Alternatively, political sociologists have long explored the concept of 'relative deprivation' – having less of something than others around you – as a pathway to political participation (for example McVeigh and Smith 1999; Dalton and van Sickle 2005). Deprivation theory runs counter to the resource theory espoused by Verba et al. (1995): deprivation theory looks at the socioeconomic factors that spur citizens to political action, whereas resource theory focuses on what citizens need in order to participate.

Comparing the effects of deprivation and resources at both national and individual levels, Dalton, van Sickle and Weldon find that

... it is certainly true individuals in lower income nations have greater objective grievances about their life conditions. Yet, without the resources and skills to become politically engaged, these grievances are typically not translated into political action... The general pattern is clear: protest does not occur primarily because people have a grievance and are blocked from other forms of action – people protest because they can (2010 p.22).

Further to this, internet users – who are the focus here – have higher average household incomes than non-users, and the most frequent and highly skilled internet users tend to have the highest incomes. Accepting Dalton et al.'s (2010) evidence that resources are more important than deprivation in mobilising protestors, the internet presumably provides high income earners with more opportunities to protest.

The third factor in the civic voluntarism model (Verba et al., 1995) is civic skills, consisting of educational attainment, language competency, job-related skills and organisational memberships. Petition signing is likely to be a factor of organisational membership in particular; an individual already belonging to an active group should have more opportunities to sign a petition, either online or offline, than non-members. Educational attainment should have a positive role for the reasons stated above: a highly educated individual is likely to be more confident about their capacity to participate and influence political outcomes. Language competency (measured by whether an individual was born in an English-speaking country) should increase someone's understanding of a petition and the consequent likelihood of signing it.

Two possible effects of internet skills have been theorised: either that they complement traditional civic skills in making participation possible, or that they can substitute for traditional civic skills (for example Krueger 2002). Evidence so far has shown some signs of substitution, where the addition of internet skills to a model predicting an offline participatory behaviour has decreased the effects of traditional civic skills. It is not expected that internet skills will have similar effects on petition signing. Unlike the contribution of time or money to a political party or writing a letter to a government official, petition signing does not *require* specific civic skills; rather those skills increase the propensity for someone to participate. Internet skills, and time spent online, are likely to instead affect protest participation by making them aware of opportunities to sign a petition. Opportunity, according to Dalton et al. (2010), is the most important determinant of protest participation. Both measures of internet use are likely to capture the effects of increased protest and petition signing opportunities available to internet users.

The civic voluntarism factors of time, money and civic skills are each expected to affect whether Australians engaged in petition signing in the five years prior to the 2010 AES. There are competing theories as to whether people protest because they have the capacity and the potential (resource theory) or because they are deprived of wealth or other resources and want to convey their dissatisfaction with government (deprivation theory). On the weight of existing evidence, it is expected that Australian petition signers will possess more time, money and civic skills than the rest of the population. More time spent online is likely to bring internet users into greater contact with information that might lead to signing offline petitions (such as organised campaign information or current affairs knowledge), increasing their opportunities to participate. Frequent internet users should also have access to more e-petitions than light internet users and non-users. Internet skills likewise should increase the likelihood that a citizen comes into contact with individual activists and groups online, leading to their recruitment into petition signing. In short, internet resources are not expected to substitute for traditional resources with regard to protest participation, but to complement them by creating increased opportunities to participate.

### ***Petition-signing in Australia over time***

The diffusion of internet access brings with it increased opportunities for citizens to express their political concerns. At the extreme end of protest and internet

proficiency is 'hacktivism', in which internet users deface or disable targets' websites or internal networks as an act of protest. Protestors in the 'Arab Spring' uprisings beginning in 2010 used social media (particularly via mobile phones) to coordinate initial protest events, mobilise others and express their support for the various revolutionary movements (Hussain and Howard, 2013). In 2012, an existing, 'offline' charity used the internet to create international support for its campaign to find Ugandan guerrilla leader Joseph Kony, while major online media outlets replaced their regular content with messages protesting proposed United States government reforms to intellectual property laws (Carroll, 2012; Dailey, 2012; Fahrenthold, 2012).

Petition-signing constitutes a means of protest at the non-confrontational end of the protest spectrum. Increasingly, it has moved from an offline to an online activity; Figure 1 shows the associated increase in the proportion of citizens signing e-petitions over time, particularly *vis a vis* written petitions since 2004. While the decline in written petition-signing has slowed since 2007, the increase in e-petition signing continued apace. Well-organised community and political advocacy organisations have assisted this modal shift: websites such as MoveOn.org provided a base for American citizens to connect with like-minded others and campaign for preferred political candidates and causes, while Change.org and similar websites allow registered users to create and distribute online petitions. In Australia, GetUp! (and its associated website, GetUp.org.au) originated in 2005 based on the MoveOn.org model. GetUp! offers free membership, and members are able to create and distribute petitions on the GetUp.org.au website. GetUp! also initiates and promotes its own campaigns on ideologically progressive causes (Vromen, 2008b).

[FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE]

The rise of GetUp! preceded the ascent of other similar organisations, including 'Change.org (Australia)' and 'GoPetition.com', which also allow users to generate and distribute e-petitions. Assisting the growth of these organisations have been recent decisions by the Queensland and federal parliaments to allow their members to table e-petitions on behalf of constituents. However, GetUp!'s membership has reached a scale unmatched by many other groups in Australian civic life. Figure 2 shows the enormous growth in GetUp! members since 2005 (McLean, 2013). Acknowledging some ongoing debate over the accuracy of these figures (see for example Andrews 2011), the total number of citizens who have signed up to contribute to a petition or to receive updates from GetUp! constitutes a sizable proportion of the Australian population. The increase

in GetUp!'s membership figures likely explains some of the increase in e-petition signing since first measured by the AES in 2004. Published membership figures show that GetUp! members are older than the national population (Mclean, 2013). Indeed one third (33 per cent) of all members are aged between 50 and 64 years.

GetUp! members are also disproportionately women: 58 per cent of members compared with 49 per cent of the Australian population. The typical GetUp! member is therefore a woman and above average age; not the stereotyped young, male internet activist. By contrast, Vromen (2011) notes that GetUp! is operated by young people, and that their campaigns often focus on young Australians and youth-related issues. GetUp! was established with the view of replicating the processes and aims of social movements in mobilising as many citizens as possible, and channelling their participation into one (usually government-based) target (Vromen, 2008b). With time, however, GetUp!'s campaigns have become more mainstreamed, focused on election campaigns and 'moral urgency' (Vromen and Coleman, 2013, 2011). The following section examines who signs written petitions, who signs e-petitions, and the extent to which e-petitions actually constitute a 'mainstream' behaviour.

[FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE]

### ***Petition signing, resources and the internet***

It is hypothesised that offline petition and e-petition signing attracts different types of individuals (Cantijoch and Gibson 2011; Gennaro and Dutton 2006; Oser et al. 2013). Drawing on Verba et al.'s (1995) civic voluntarism model of participation, Table 1 explores the mean characteristics of Australians who did not sign a petition, signed an offline petition, signed an e-petition or signed both between 2005 and 2010. The most notable difference among the four groups concerns gender: the AES data here show that 68 per cent of Australians who signed both online and offline petitions are women, compared with 47 per cent of those who signed e-petitions only. It seems that men sign e-petitions, but not offline petitions; they may not be exposed to as many offline petitions. Alongside being predominantly men, the younger age, higher employment status, higher household incomes and higher educational attainment of e-petition signers are all characteristic of internet users generally.

Likewise, e-petition signers also possess greater internet skills and spend more time online than the rest of the population. Counter to this is that e-petition signers are



the least likely to have been born in an English-speaking country, suggesting that language proficiency is not a barrier to signing online petitions. Those who did not sign a petition possess the fewest job and internet skills and are the least likely to belong to a non-political organisation. They are also the oldest group on average, with the least political knowledge, the lowest rate of employment (and the most free time) and the lowest household incomes. They are far less likely than offline petition signers to be born in an English-speaking country, but slightly more likely than exclusively online petition signers (70 compared with 67 per cent). As far as anything can be inferred from this descriptive analysis, it is hypothesised that multivariate analysis will find civic skills are strong determinants of online petition signing, and less strong (but still positive) determinants of offline petition signing. In both cases, signers possess greater civic skills – both online and offline skills – than non-signers.

[TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

The results of a logistic regression analysis predicting e-petition signing show the importance of civic skills (Table 2). This analysis includes and controls for possible confounding factors that might better explain e-petition signing, such as socioeconomic status. The regression coefficients presented in this analysis represent the specific (partial) effect of each individual factor, with other factors in the model held at their mean. Age has a small negative effect, even taking into account the relative youth of internet users generally, while the effect of household income is significant but negative. Frequency of time spent online retains a strong positive effect, while free time offline has no effect. The civic skills measures of educational attainment, organisational memberships and internet skills each have strong positive effects; combined, an individual possessing all of these skills has a much greater likelihood of signing an e-petition. When holding other factors constant, the effect of being born in an English-speaking country (a proxy for language proficiency) is not significant. Further, the effects of gender are unexpectedly strong: a woman is twice as likely to sign an e-petition as a man, all other factors being equal.

[TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE]

Importantly, the analysis shows that online resources are more important than traditional resources in predicting e-petition signing. The effect of organisational memberships on e-petition signing is likely the result of members' increased exposure to e-petitions; belonging to both formal organisational networks as well as informal networks with like others should mean an individual is emailed or comes across more e-

petitions than someone outside of those networks. Likewise educational attainment has a small positive effect on e-petition signing, probably reflecting the increased political knowledge and political efficacy that come with formal education. An individual without formal educational qualifications, with no job-related skills and little language proficiency is almost as likely to sign an e-petition as somebody with all of those resources, so long as he spends time online and has at least some internet-related skills. This finding contrasts with the descriptive analysis presented in Table 1. When government officials or parliamentary representatives read an e-petition, they can be confident that its signers do not represent any particular socioeconomic bias. Rather, they represent the increasingly diffuse population of internet users in Australia.

The adapted civic voluntarism model is tested here to predict offline petition signing in Australia (Table 3). As expected, civic skills have strong positive effects on offline petition signing. While being born in an English-speaking country has a negative effect on e-petition signing in Table 2, here it increases the likelihood of signing an offline petition by 61 per cent. The other civic skills measures of educational attainment, organisational memberships and job skills have smaller effects, but all are positive and significant. Overall, this model suggests that Australians who sign written petitions resemble the ‘typical’ participant to emerge from the vast literature: well educated, highly skilled and embedded in social and professional networks that expose them to opportunities to participate. Household income again has a small negative effect, suggesting the possibility of a ‘relative deprivation’ effect. Alternatively, household income may include some proxy measure of young, well-educated single-dwellers. Finally, and as in Table 2, being a woman has a strong positive effect on written petition signing.

[TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE]

The overwhelming result from these analyses predicting e-petition and offline petition signing is that civic skills are the largest barrier to entry, but that emerging forms of online skills can supplement the effects of offline civic skills. Online resources are the most important factor in predicting e-petition signing: those who sign online petitions are more likely to be frequent, proficient internet users than to have high socioeconomic status or to have job-related skills. Offline resources have almost no impact on whether or not somebody signs an online petition. On the contrary, resources – specifically internet skills – have a strong positive effect on whether an individual signed an offline petition in the previous five years. This is an unexpected finding, and to

some extent an unexplained one. Two *prima facie* explanations seem possible. First, online skills may be acting as a proxy measure for online interconnectedness, which would see a respondent more likely to be recruited into offline networks that distribute and share offline petitions. Second, possessing online skills could increase a respondent's exposure to information on the internet, which cognitively mobilises him or her to sign petitions wherever the opportunity presents, be it offline or online. The combined results of these analyses indicate that not only do equivalent online forms of traditional acts of participation attract different types of participants – particularly ones without a systemic socioeconomic bias – but also that online resources can supplement and even substitute for offline resources in enabling offline participation. The findings here add further weight to the mounting evidence that internet use is materially changing the profile of who participates in political life.

### ***From shopping malls to the internet: implications for gender***

Petition-signing comprises one of the few areas of political behaviour in which women have shown an advantage over men. An apparent explanation for this anomaly in representation is that offline petitions tend to be circulated in places where women have traditionally outnumbered men, including shopping centres and school-gates (see for example Parry et al. 2012). This explanation supports the opportunity thesis of participation, over the deprivation thesis; it is not necessarily that women are more deprived than men and choose to express their discontent through petitions, but that they have greater opportunities to sign, lowering the costs of participation relative to the benefits. It is notable that studies from other democracies do not find the same gender differences in petition-signing; in the UK and US, women and men are approximately equally likely to report having signed a petition (Jenkins 2005; Coffé and Bolzendahl 2010; Burns et al. 2009). There may be something characteristic about how offline petitions are circulated in Australia that leads to such disproportionate representation of women.

Having established that women are more likely than men to sign offline petitions, this analysis shows that women are, net of other factors, also more likely to sign e-petitions. In fact, being a woman increases the propensity of offline petition signing by 53 per cent (per the odds ratio in Table 3), compared with 120 per cent for e-petition signing. There seems little reason to fear that shift from circulating petitions from offline to online, evident in Figure 1, has negative implications for women's

representation. To explore the hypothesis that women will lose the advantage in petition signing afforded them by opportunities to sign offline petitions, Figure 3 shows the propensity to sign offline and e-petitions among Australian women by age (smoothed by conditional mean), analysing the most recent AES data. While both forms of petition signing decrease with age, offline signing peaks after the age of 40, at least 10 years later than e-petition signing.

There are two potential explanations offering competing hypotheses. First, a generational hypothesis proposes that the relative youth of e-petition signers is evidence of new activists 'coming of age' and using the medium with which they are comfortable. The hypothesis from this explanation bodes positively for women participation, in that women will continue to sign e-petitions as they age. Alternatively, a lifecycle explanation would predict that as e-petitions overtake offline forms, older citizens, who are known to use the internet less than younger cohorts, will drop out of the activity and not be replaced. E-petition signing would continue to peak between 20 and 40 years of age, and decline rapidly per the cross-sectional data in Figure 3. While further cross-sectional or, preferably, panel data are not yet available to provide a more authoritative answer, the strong partial effects of (female) gender on e-petition signing suggest that the women's dominance of petition-signing in Australia will persist, regardless of mode.

## ***Conclusion***

Although rates of overall petition signing have remained relatively stable over recent years in Australia, the share of offline and e-petitions has shifted with e-petition signing on the rise. This is in part attributed to the advent of online progressive advocacy group GetUp!, which reports more than 600,000 Australian members, as well as other online organisations and outlets dedicated to distributing online petitions. (McLean, 2013). Petition signers in Australia possessed greater socioeconomic resources and civic skills than the rest of the population. In t-test analyses, e-petition signers in particular are younger than the population mean, and significantly less likely to be born in an English-speaking country (although this relationship loses significance in multivariate tests). Combined with the high rates of non-political organisational memberships among offline and e-petition signers, the descriptive evidence suggests that exposure and opportunity are key factors in petition signing generally. Similarly,

Dalton et al. (2010) argue that opportunity is more important than deprivation in the pathway to protesting, and the descriptive evidence here concurs.

Multivariate analyses shed more light on the relative resources and deprivations of Australian petition signers. Internet skills had positive effects on both forms of petition signing. Educational attainment had significant and positive effects on both forms of petition signing. On the other hand, household income has negative partial effects on each, suggesting some role for relative deprivation in mobilising protestors. Specifically, there may be an effect of dissonance between educational attainment and actual earnings that leads to protest activity. Being born in an English-speaking country – a proxy measure for language proficiency – had a strong positive effect on offline petition signing, but no significant effect on e-petition signing. This unexpected result likely has implications for participation among ethnically diverse Australians, and warrants further investigation. The high rates of women's participation in petition signing extend to e-petitions, and there is reason to believe that they will persist as e-petitions overtake offline petitions in popularity. In sum, e-petitions in Australia have expanded the opportunity to participate to traditionally under-represented groups, who have seized upon that opportunity in relatively large numbers. This finding adds weight to the increasing ranks of studies reporting positive normative outcomes from the emergence of new opportunities to participate online.

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### Appendix: Variable scoring

Measure	Survey question	Mean	SD
Age (derived)	In what year were you born?	48.17	17.62
Australian-born	In which country were you born? 1=Australia, England, New Zealand, Ireland (i.e. all English-speaking countries listed); 0=all others.	.78	.41
E-petition signing	Over the past five years or so, have you done any of the following things to express your views about something the government should or should not be doing? Signed an online or e-petition 1=Yes	.20	.40
Education	Have you obtained a trade qualification, a degree or a diploma, or any other qualification since leaving school? What is your highest qualification? 1=No qualification since leaving school, 2=Non-trade qualification, 3=Trade qualification, 4=Associate Diploma, 5=Undergraduate Diploma, 6= Bachelor Degree (including honours) , 7=Postgraduate Degree or Postgraduate Diploma	3.39	2.17
Employment status	Now some questions about the work you are doing now. Last week, what were you mainly doing? 1=Retired from paid work; 2=Unemployed (looking for part-time work); 3=Unemployed (looking for full-time work); 4=Keeping house; 5=Working part-time for pay; 6=Full-time school or university student; 7=Working full-time for pay	4.85	2.33
Free time per day (hours)	On an average weekday, how many hours per day do you have to yourself (that is, time awake without having to work, spend time at college or other educational programs, do housework, look after children or deal with other people's needs)? Please give your answer to the nearest hour.	6.80	7.58
Internet skills	Have you done any of the following tasks on the internet? Sent an attachment with an email; Posted audio, video or image files; Personally designed a webpage or blog; Downloaded a software program to your computer Scale variable created using count (value=1) of three binary variables	1.91	.40
Job-related skills	In the last 12 months, have you done any of the following activities as part of your involvement with your job, community or other organisations you belong to? Written a letter; Gone to a meeting where you took part in making decisions; Planned or chaired a meeting; Given a presentation or speech Scale variable created using count (value=1) of four binary variables	1.45	1.50
Membership of non-political organisations	Are you an active member of any of the following organisations, an inactive member or not a member? Business or employers' association; Farmers' association; Professional association; Charitable organisation; Sport or recreation organisation Scale variable created using count of 'active member' responses	.49	.76
Political interest	Generally speaking, how much interest do you usually have in what's going on in politics? 1=None; 2=Not much; 3=Some; 4=A great deal	3.20	.78
Political knowledge	And finally, a quick quiz on Australian government. For each of the following statements, please say whether it is true or false. If you don't know the answer, cross the 'don't know' box and try the next one. Australia became a Federation in 1901; There are 75 members of the House of Representatives; The Constitution can only be changed by the High Court; The Senate election is based on proportional representation; No one may stand for Federal parliament unless they pay a deposit; The longest time allowed between Federal elections for the House of Representatives is four years Scale variable created measuring number of correct answers	2.41	1.72
Sex	Are you male or female? 1=Female	.51	.50
Time spent online	In general, how often do you use the internet? 1=Do not use the internet; 2=Less often; 3=Every few week; 4=One to two days a week; 5=Three to five days a week; 6=About once a day; 7=Several times a day	5.28	2.27
Written petition signing	Over the past five years or so, have you done any of the following things to express your views about something the government should or should not be doing? Signed a written petition. 1=Yes	.44	.50

**Table 1: Mean characteristics of petition signers and non-signers in Australia, 2010**

	Did not sign a petition (n=1331)	Signed 'offline' petition (n=563)	Signed 'online' petition (n=63)	Signed 'offline' and 'online' petition (n=257)
<i>Money</i>				
Household income	9.34 (5.82)	11.26 (5.91)	13.41 (5.60)	12.46 (5.49)**
<i>Time</i>				
Time to self	7.88 (6.53)	6.30 (6.09)	6.20 (5.65)	6.31 (10.73)**
Time spent on internet	4.12 (2.60)	4.98 (2.29)	6.66 (0.96)	6.47 (1.05)**
Employment status	3.89 (2.56)	4.40 (2.47)	5.03 (2.28)	5.14 (2.04)**
<i>Civic skills</i>				
Educational attainment	2.81 (1.99)	3.49 (2.18)	4.02 (2.24)	4.18 (2.29)**
Born in English- speaking country	.70 (0.46)	.82 (0.39)	.67 (0.47)	.80 (0.40)**
Membership of non- political organisations	.36 (0.66)	.58 (0.80)	.62 (0.96)	.70 (0.90)**
Job skills	1.10 (1.42)	1.73 (1.53)	1.56 (1.52)	2.02 (1.53)**
Internet skills	1.13 (1.29)	1.67 (1.33)	2.83 (1.10)	2.69 (0.97)**
<i>Engagement</i>				
Interest in politics	3.16 (0.79)	3.20 (.77)	3.16 (0.87)	3.24 (0.79)
Political knowledge	2.28 (1.81)	2.84 (1.73)	2.62 (1.77)	2.98 (1.68)**
<i>Controls</i>				
Female	.51 (0.50)	.50 (0.50)	.47 (0.50)	.68 (0.47)**
Age	59.73 (16.27)	55.96 (14.48)	42.02 (16.19)	45.49 (14.98)**

One-way ANOVA. Standard deviations in parentheses. Between-group differences: \*\*p<.01 \*p<.10.  
Source: 2010 Australian Election Study (McAllister et al., 2010a). See Appendix for variable coding.

**Table 2: Predictors of signing an e-petition, 2010**

	B	SE	Exp(B)
Money			
Household income	-.029*	.013	0.972
Time			
Frequency of internet use	.482**	.082	1.620
Hours to self	.012	.008	1.012
Civic skills			
Educational attainment	.080*	.031	1.083
Born in English-speaking country	.067	.173	0.935
Organisational memberships	.273**	.083	1.314
Job skills	.031	.049	1.032
Internet skills	.356**	.074	1.428
Controls			
Age	-.015**	.005	0.985
Female	.791**	.132	2.205
Constant	-5.944	.657	
$\chi^2$	357.271		
-2 log likelihood	1517.282		
Nagelkerke $r^2$	.278		

Binary logistic regression analysis. \*\* $p < .01$  \* $p < .05$  (two-tailed).  $n = 1725$ .

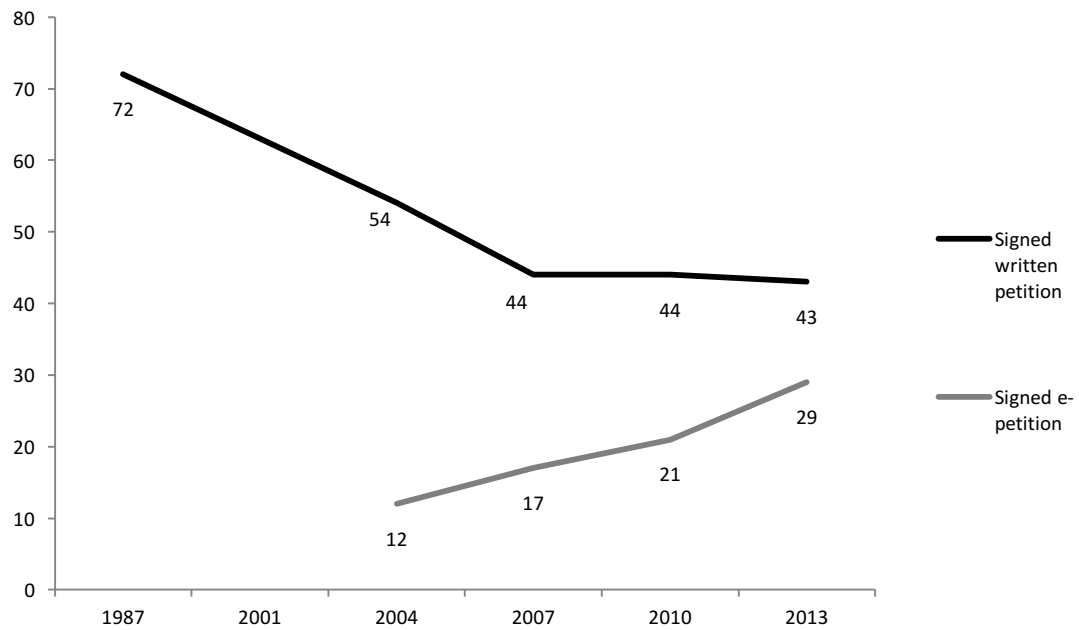
Source: Australian Election Study 2010 (McAllister et al., 2010a). See Appendix for variable coding.

**Table 3: Predictors of signing an offline petition, 2010**

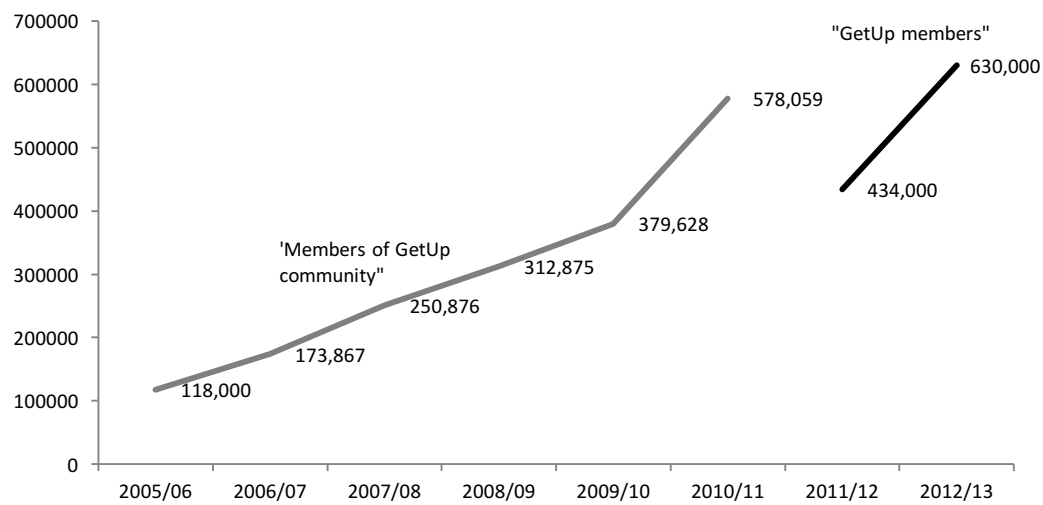
	B	SE	Exp(B)
Money			
Household income	-.029**	.010	0.972
Time			
Frequency of internet use	.044	.036	1.045
Hours to self	-.005	.007	0.995
Civic skills			
Educational attainment	.047*	.025	1.048
Born in English-speaking country	.474**	.127	1.606
Organisational memberships	.218**	.071	1.244
Job skills	.123**	.038	1.131
Internet skills	.235**	.057	1.264
Controls			
Age	.007*	.004	1.007
Female	.424**	.099	1.528
Constant	-2.393	.363	
$\chi^2$	148.914		
-2 log likelihood	2391.268		
Nagelkerke $R^2$	.104		

Binary logistic regression analysis. \*\* $p < .01$  \* $p < .05$  (two-tailed).  $n = 1779$ .

Source: Australian Election Study 2010 (McAllister et al., 2010a). See Appendix for variable coding.



**Figure 1: Measures of protest participation among Australian citizens, 1987 to 2013**  
**Source:** 2013, 2010, 2007, 2004, 2001 and 1987 Australian Election Studies (McAllister and Mughan 1987; Bean et al. 2001; Bean et al. 2004; Bean et al. 2007; McAllister et al. 2010; McAllister et al. 2013)



**Figure 2: GetUp! membership, 2005/06 to 2012/13.**

Note measurement changes from “members of GetUp community” between 2005 and 2011 to “GetUp members” from 2011 to 2013.

Source: ‘About GetUp!’ (McLean 2013)